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# Careering Ahead

## Getting by, getting on or getting ahead?

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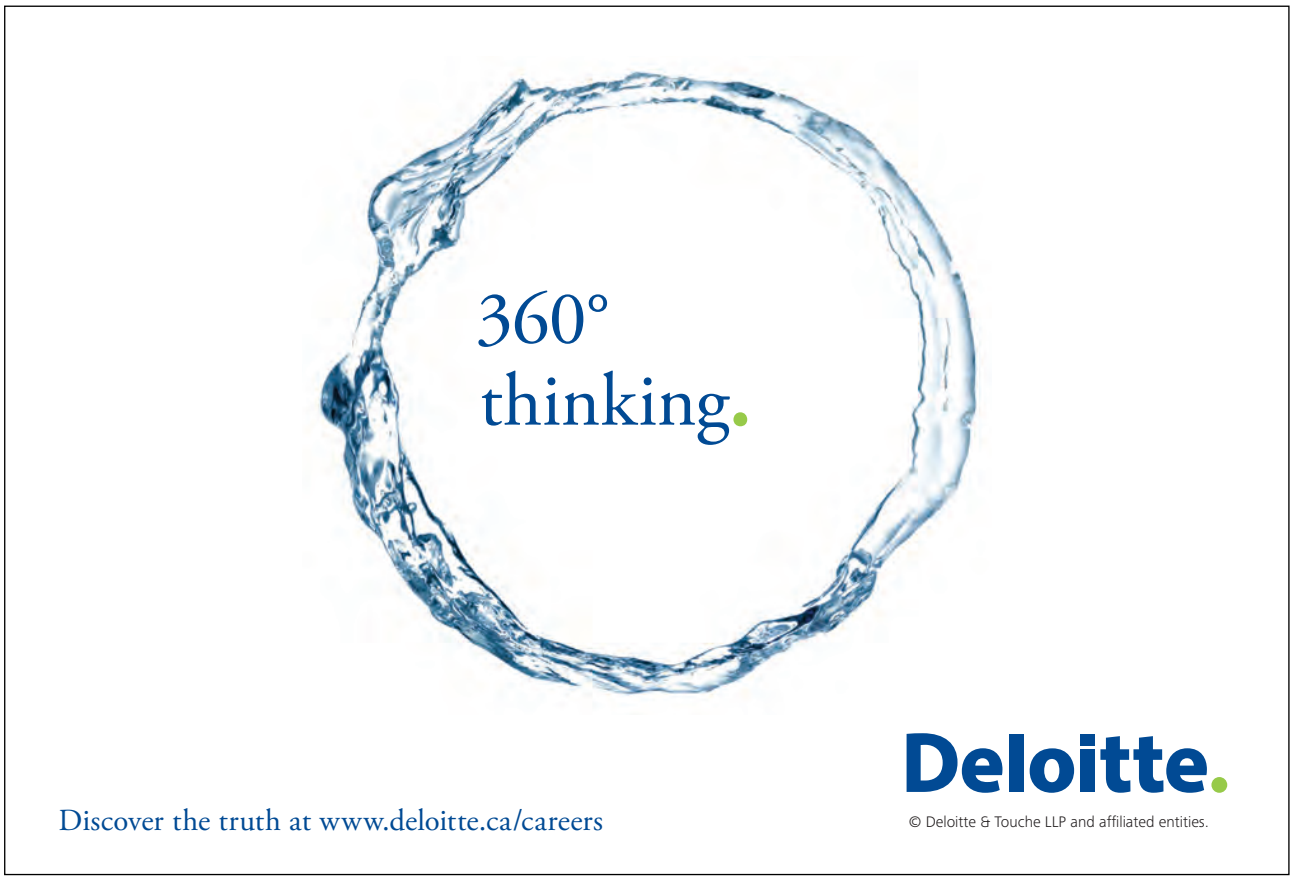


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# Preface

Most suveys into what employers want in their staff would result in a similar list. Employers are looking for people who are good at:

- Teamwork
- Communication
- Self-motivation
- Planning and organising
- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Time management and prioritising
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Willingness to learn
- Interpersonal and negotiating skills

Many people think the key to shaping a career is in developing skills that others value. This is important but it's only part of the story. You should always remember that your career is just that, *yours*. This e-book will help you to think differently about what it takes to develop a successful career. It's a collection of helpful hints, practical ideas, and insightful thought-provokers. Take some time to think differently about what work means to you, both now and in the future. Then think about how to get your career careering ahead!

Apex Leadership Limited was founded by Anthony Sturgess and Phil Higson. They have a long track record of developing innovative and challenging management and leadership development interventions, including programmes which have won national awards. From several MBA programmes to tailored, client specific programmes, Anthony and Phil have worked with new and experienced managers, in a wide range of organisations, across a breadth of management and leadership roles.

**Anthony Sturgess** has almost twenty years experience in the teaching, facilitation and coaching of managers and leaders. This experience ranges from individual leadership and management development to leading organisational change.

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Anthony has worked with a wide range of managers from small and large organisations. More widely, he has worked within client organisations, using an internal consultancy approach to create tailored development solutions and programmes. These have supported numerous public and private sector organisations to successfully develop their managers, to achieve effective change, and to realise genuine organisational improvements.

**Phil Higson** is a published author and active researcher, with over 25 years experience in business and management education as lecturer, course developer, manager, external examiner and consultant. He has worked mainly in UK universities although he has also consulted or taught in France, Russia and Hong Kong.

A former MBA course leader, Phil has also written research articles and conference papers exploring the role of business schools in workplace management development. Before becoming an educator, Phil worked in several small and large organisations, in both the UK and Australia.

This combination of management experience in small and large organisations, in both private and public sectors, has given Phil a wide ranging perspective on work and management. Phil has authored or created numerous training and development tools and is experienced in managing large projects to support management and leadership development in a range of organisations.

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Or you can visit the major online resource developed by Apex Leadership at:
The Happy Manager – helping you find a better way to manage.

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# 1 Introduction

Careers are becoming increasingly difficult areas to predict and to plan. That's because so much of what once seemed quite predictable is now changing. Two helpful ways to think about this unpredictablility are to consider how the nature of work is changing and secondly, how our relationship with employers is changing.

**The nature of work is changing because:**

- It's very likely our working life will be longer.
- The speed of change meand knowledge and skills are becoming outdated more rapidly than before, and need to be continually refreshed, renewed and replaced.
- Home-working, virtual teams, the internet and other rapid techological changes are making flexible working patterns far more common.
- Keeping up to date with changes may well mean being flexible about how you career develops.

**Our relationship with employers is changing because:**

- Many of us will work for several different organisations during our working lives.
- Many people will have periods when they work for themselves, in various forms of self-employmeent.
- The the relationship between employee and employer (the psychological contract) is changing. Employers are providing less certainty because of uncertain times now and ahead. Equally, employees are gaining new powers and flexibility with the knowledge they have and the use of technology, enabling them to move jobs more easily.
- When employers are less able (or likely) to offer job security, employees need to think more about their "employability". This means a more focused attention on the currency of your skills, knowledge and experience. This is what gives you security of employment, although not necessarily with the same organisation.
- Careers planned within large organisations, once a central feature of organisational life, are now relatively few and far between.

All of these aspects will have a profound impact on how we develop our careers. The most important thing you can do is to remember that strengthening and developing *your* employability is *your* responsibility. If you don't take control of your career development, it's highly unlikely that anyone else will!

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Increasingly, this all means that:

- Individuals will need to take responsibility for their own career development, to a far greater extent than in the past.
- Individuals need to think and act as if they are self-employed. Develop your career by developing "brand you".

### Overview of this e-book

So how do you take control of your career? A good place to start is to think about how careers develop. For many of us our careers feel like they happen to us and we get by. How can you put things in place to help you get on and get ahead? Getting ahead suggests a proactive and responsive approach to career development. This matters, but it is also important to realise that what we want out of our career often changes over time. Careers tend to develop in stages and understanding career and life stages is crucial. So one way to think about your career is to be aware of the different focus you may have at different stages of your career.

Having a sense of how your career might develop over time leads to a fundamental career question: how can you make a success of your career? We'll help you to think through what success could mean for you, and encourage you to take a broad view of how you might understand success. One way to think about developing your career is to think about what motivates you? Can you build a career on something that inspires you or that you are passionate about?

Increasingly building your career means continually developing and learning. So next we move on to explore the importance of education and development in building your career. In this e-book you'll find a very simple model to help make your learning in the workplace more effective.

Next we return to ask some searching questions about what you want out of a career. In the section: "how do you define your work?" we introduce some research about the importance of crafting what you do into something you see as significant. Different people adopt different attitudes to work. For some it's just a job, for others it's a vocation and for some, it feels like a calling. We ask some useful career development questions, including: how do you view your work, and how can you craft a career which is more of a calling?

Of course good intentions and ideas about what you would like to do are often difficult to realise. That is, unless you have some practical steps to take. To do this you'll need some strategies to shape your career and that is what we consider next. Our "Happy Work-cycle" suggests five strategies to help you find work where you're doing what you love, or maybe just to cope with doing what you have to do.

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It would be remiss of an e-book on career development not to discuss two of the most challenging aspects of career activities. One way or another, we will probably all experience what you might call the two extremes of careers. The first is the interview, the start-point for a new job. The other extreme is when you lose your job. Both extremes are too important not to think through!

So we have put some advice together on how to deal with these two critical phases of any career:

- Questions to ask at an interview.
- A plan to help you deal with job loss.

Finally, we finish the e-book with a powerful story about beginning with the end in mind. So hopefully, once you've read to the end, we'll get you thinking about the right way to begin. And then perhaps you'll be better equipped to start careering ahead!

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# 2 Getting by, getting on and getting ahead

Which of these career paths do you feel you are following at the moment?

- **Are you just getting by?**
- **Are you getting on?**
- **Or are you getting ahead?**

How do you take control of your career? A good place to start is to think about how careers develop. For many people, careers feel like they are just happening to them. Perhaps they're just getting by, doing little to influence which career paths they might take. How can you avoid that, perhaps by putting things in place to help you do more than get by? Getting on and getting ahead?

## 2.1 Three career paths: getting by, getting on and getting ahead

All too often a career can seem to be something you just end up with, especially after life takes its various twists and turns. Whilst it's true that luck and circumstance play a part in most people's careers, there is much that we can all do to make the most of the chances that come our way. After all, as Louis Pasteur once said:

**"Chance favours only the prepared mind."**

How can you be better prepared to make the most of the opportunities that arise? A helpful place to start is to compare three possible career paths.

You might develop by:

- **Getting by** – this simply suggests that you don't really plan or focus on your career but instead simply get by.
- **Getting on** – suggests that you start to realise some of your potential by getting on better with those in your organisation, and by starting to identify what you need to get on in your career.
- **Getting ahead** – is more than knowing what skills and knowledge you might need, it is about developing the social skills and breadth of connections which offer the opportunities for you to get ahead in your career.

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Of course, at different times in your career you may feel that you are only getting by, and just about coping or holding down the job you're in. This could be due to a number of perfectly understandable reasons:

- Other aspects of your life are more important and need your time, so there is less focus on career progression.
- It may be that circumstances in your current job mean that progression will be difficult.

Sometimes getting by can be enough. The lucky ones amongst us may find that career paths appear without the call for much focus or planning attention. This may have been more likely in the large organisations of the past, where your career progress was possibly mapped out by the organisation. But that is rarely the case today. Today more than ever, it's likely that you will move between different career paths at different times.

At other times you may well feel that getting on is enough, as you begin shaping a career by building your skills, knowledge and crucially, your experience. You will be gaining confidence in your role; others are seeing you as competent and respecting your view and your work. This is the time to make sure you are prepared for opportunities as they develop – to think about getting ahead. But how can you move from getting by or getting on, to getting ahead?

Having a prepared mind is the first step. Thinking, planning and being prepared to make the most of chance and fortune as it comes your way. Getting ahead often means getting connected. And this is not just about chance, it's about developing the skills that will enable you to build and use your network.

Another way to answer this question is to think about getting ahead in your career by developing your social capital. Getting ahead often means getting connected. So to take a different look at making better connections, we'll introduce the idea of social capital. This is an often overlooked way to help you get ahead and to improve your career planning.

## 2.2 Social Capital

What exactly is social capital? It's described as an informal network of mutual aid and information exchange that keeps communities thriving. Crucially this network can act as a strong support for satisfaction and happiness and help you to connect in ways that can enhance your career. Within your own organisation the network you develop can be central to how you develop your career. Wherever possible try and make sure you work with managers and leaders who can really help you develop. Working for a good manager makes a significant difference. Your connections outside of your immediate workplace can also have a big impact on your career development. Think about how you can build up a wider network outside of your workplace. How can you get to know people more widely in your industry? Sometimes it is the weaker or "looser" connections that can hold the greatest potential for you.

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To find out why this is we need to return to some of the ideas behind social capital. Sociologists refer to social capital (the connectedness which builds a strong society) in two ways:

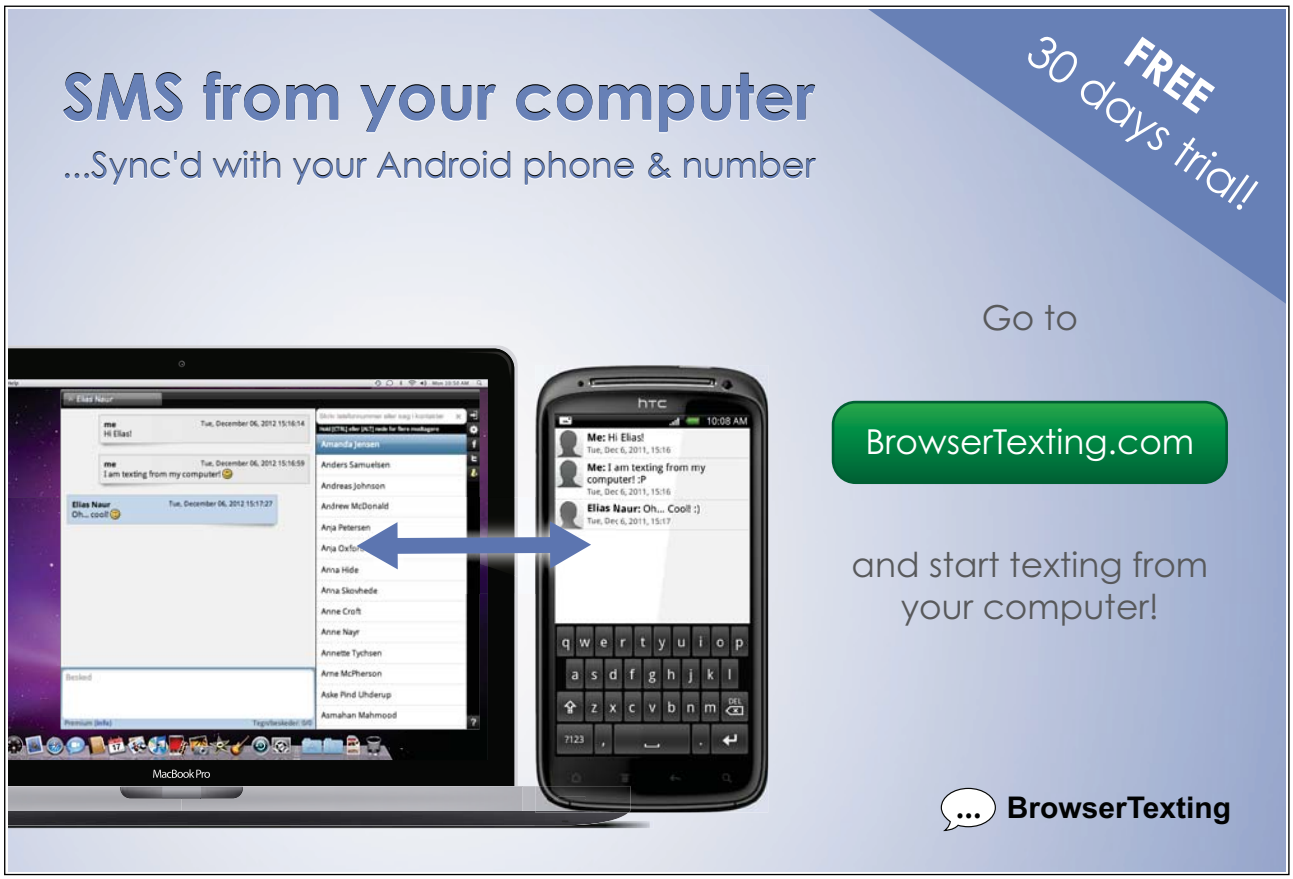
- the social capital that **bonds**
- the social capital that **bridges.**

Bonding connections re-inforce similarities amongst individuals, whereas bridging connections span differences. In practice, most societies combine both to one degree or another.

Bridging also refers to looser ties we may have to distant contacts, rather than the stronger, bonding ties we have with closer relationships. Research has shown that where networking is concerned, it's the bridging rather than the bonding ties which may prove more beneficial.

In his book "Bowling Alone", Robert Putnam quotes Xavier de Souza Briggs who suggests that bonding social capital is good for "getting by", but bridging social capital is crucial for "getting ahead". Bridging generates broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding bolsters a narrower perspective.

Putnam imaginatively contrasts the two. "…bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging provides a sociological WD-40."

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So to enhance your career you do need to bond with others to build those kinds of connections you are often networking in your own organisation. However the kind of skills that are likely to help you get ahead are those of "bridging" where you make connections more widely.

Think about your own network and how you connect with others:

- Write down the current connections you have.
- Who might your current connections know that they could introduce you to?
- Can you expand the number of connections you have?
- Who would be useful and helpful for you to know?
- Who do you need to build relationships with in your organisation?
- Who can you connect with outside your organisation in your field of expertise?
- How do you maintain your connections?

Getting on with your career will start to happen when you build you networks and bonds with people around you. Getting ahead will be helped when you bridge more widely and expand your network making connections firstly in your organisation, you need to bridge to other teams and departments and other levels of the organisation. Secondly you need bridge across your sector or profession or areas of expertise if you want to open up opportunities elsewhere.

Different career paths are not the only way that to think about your career. The path you take may well vary according to the stage of your career. Career stages are as important as career paths when considering how to develop your career.

## 2.3 Careers in stages

It is also worth realising that your career priorities will often change at different stages of your work life. For example, your career needs will be different as you start out in the workplace to those when perhaps wider aspects of your life begin to make demands on your time and on your goals. One way to think about this is to view different career stages:

- Beginnings
- Growth
- Mastery
- Midlife
- Maturity
- Transition

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Each of the stages is likely to suggest different approaches and a different focus for career development. The following table provides a summary of some of the different approaches for each of the six career stages.

| Stage | Work | Life |
|---|---|---|
| Beginnings | Training, learning, stretching and finding your talent | Socialising, exploring, creating a social life |
| Growth | Ability, advancement, growing confidence | Increasing financial commitments, possible family commitments |
| Mastery | Capability and competence | Balancing act, building financial stability, established social network |
| Midlife | Competing pressures and contribution peak | Midlife crisis! |
| Maturity | Thinking about legacy and impact | Possible caring responsibilities for elderly relatives |
| Transition | To post work lifestyle | Enjoying retirement |

There are a number of important points that come from thinking of your career in terms of career and life stages:

- Your goals are likely to change at different career stages
- You need to regularly review your career and life stages and assess what your priorities are
- You should look ahead and plan to develop your career in a way that is ready for the next stage
- Be aware of feeling you are stuck in a stage
- Think about both your career and your life goals together
- Keep learning and keep developing
- Others around you will be at different stages and therefore may well have different priorities

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Here are some helpful pointers to think about for each of the stages:

| Stage | Questions |
|---|---|
| **Beginnings** | What do I enjoy doing?<br>What do I already do well that I can improve on?<br>What career opportunities are most likely to provide me with the best training and learning experience? |
| **Growth** | Where can I best apply my developing skills?<br>How can I improve my skills?<br>How can I make an impact with my expertise? |
| **Mastery** | How do I make significant contributions to the business/profession?<br>How do I balance competing priorities? |
| **Midlife** | Do I need to find new challenges or a different focus?<br>How do I ensure that I don't get stuck in a rut? |
| **Maturity** | How do I pass on my experience?<br>How do I encourage others to develop their capabilities?<br>What wider contribution do I want to make? |
| **Transition** | What other ways can I pursue my interest and passions?<br>What new things have I now got time to explore? |

## 2.4 Personal Investment? You're Worth It

Today most professionals will have careers spanning several organisations, possibly including some degree of self-employment. Treat your career as a series of opportunities to add to your portfolio of:

- skills
- qualifications
- contacts
- experience
- understanding

Remember, whatever your situation, you're always working for yourself. Make the most of any chances to add to this portfolio, increasing your professional value. If these opportunities are scarce, try to create them. Suggest development activities to your manager, naturally ensuring you stress the value to the organisation, as well as to yourself. One way to do this is to always be looking for the opportunities in what you currently do.

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# 3 Making a success of your career

Having thought about how careers may develop, it's now important to think about what you want out of your career. What would success mean for you? Everybody will have their own answers to this question, and often the answer will change at different points in our careers.

## 3.1 Defining success differently

However, you should also ensure you live a balanced life. Being successful might be easier if you think carefully about what success really means.

Here are two interesting perspectives to think about:

Firstly, Dale Carnegie's insight:

**"Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get."**

Prioritising your development will contribute to a far healthier life than merely chasing money or status. This is what Harvard academic Tal Ben-Shahar calls the "ultimate currency" – happiness.

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The second quotation draws on a wider perspective about how your success might enable others to succeed:

**"Success in management is when those you manage succeed,
and the organisation you work for succeeds."** (unknown source)

## 3.2 Enduring success

Two Harvard academics, Laura Nash and Howard Stevenson, talked to high achievers, interviewing successful professionals and surveying more than 100 executives attending Harvard management programmes. As a result they proposed an ideal of "enduring success".

They suggest this has four categories:

Achievement – accomplishments
Happiness – feelings of pleasure or contentment about life
Significance – a positive impact on people you care about
Legacy – establishing your values or accomplishments in ways that help others find future success

Nash and Stevenson suggest that "enduring success" is a journey of balancing work, family, self and community, and not being obsessed with "one big goal".

How do people achieve this? They do it by focusing on just enough.

"You don't have to succeed at everything at once. Some things are enough for now; others can wait until later."

But just enough isn't simply about settling for mediocrity or second best.

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"By just enough we don't mean settling for the minimum. Just enough is actually a vehicle for actively making choices that get you more, not less, through achieving satisfactions on more dimensions in life."

So think about your career in terms of development, and that should be about much more than job specific needs. It does involve career development, but as part of a balanced life. The real priority is to ensure you spend time developing as a person. Authentic happiness comes from balancing pleasure, commitment and contribution.

Developing others around us is an ideal way to attain each of these elements of happiness. Good managers also foster growth around them. Developing our own careers is important but helping to build the careers of the people we manage completes a virtuous circle. If you are a manager or aspire to be one, then this point is worth noting. So much of what a manager achieves is down to how well their team achieves. Helping get the best out of those around you isn't just a nice thing to do it's the right thing to do if you want to build your own career!

Helping others in this way contributes to our happiness, their happiness, and to the success of our organisations. Hopefully then, you'll also be thinking about bringing out the best in your colleagues. One interesting perspective is summarised very well by Yahoo's Tim Sanders who once said:

> "Business people who are the busiest, the happiest, and the most prosperous are the ones who are the most generous with their knowledge and their expertise. People who love what they're doing, who love to learn new things, to meet new people, and to share what and whom they know with others: these are the people who wind up creating the new economic value and, as a result, moving their companies forward."

Think for a moment about this description of people who love what they do and share what they know with others. How can you develop your approach to learn more and better share what might be useful and helpful to others?

## 3.3 Enthusiasm

Implicit in the quotation from Tim Sanders is not only the generosity of the person he describes. Just as important is the enthusiasm and infectious nature of sharing with others something you love doing. Try to make enthusiasm central to your career: Enthusiasm is infectious!

In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson:

"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm!"

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Often those around us catch that sense of passion, causing a multiplying and magnifying effect. Of course whilst being enthusiastic is highly desirable, having an enthusiasm is something entirely different.

It's far easier to love what you do, if you can apply an enthusiasm to your career. When properly developed and applied, an enthusiasm can get you a long way. However this knowledge and passion must be in an area of value to your work, otherwise it's really a hobby. So make sure you don't mistake an enthusiasm that is really a hobby with one that people value and would be willing to pay you enough to earn you a living.

Think about developing a specialism relevant to your work. Preferably one which inspires you!

So what are you enthusiastic about? If enthusiasm is joined with expertise and knowledge, then you are beginning to build a powerful combination. You do of course need to take care here. Ensuring that enthusiasm is joined with knowledge is an important point. In fact when enthusiasm isn't back up by expertise and knowledge it can be at the worst dangerous and at the least very frustrating and annoying to those around.

In his book: The 80/20 Principle: The Secret of Achieving More with Less, Richard Koch makes some suggestions relevant to happiness at work.

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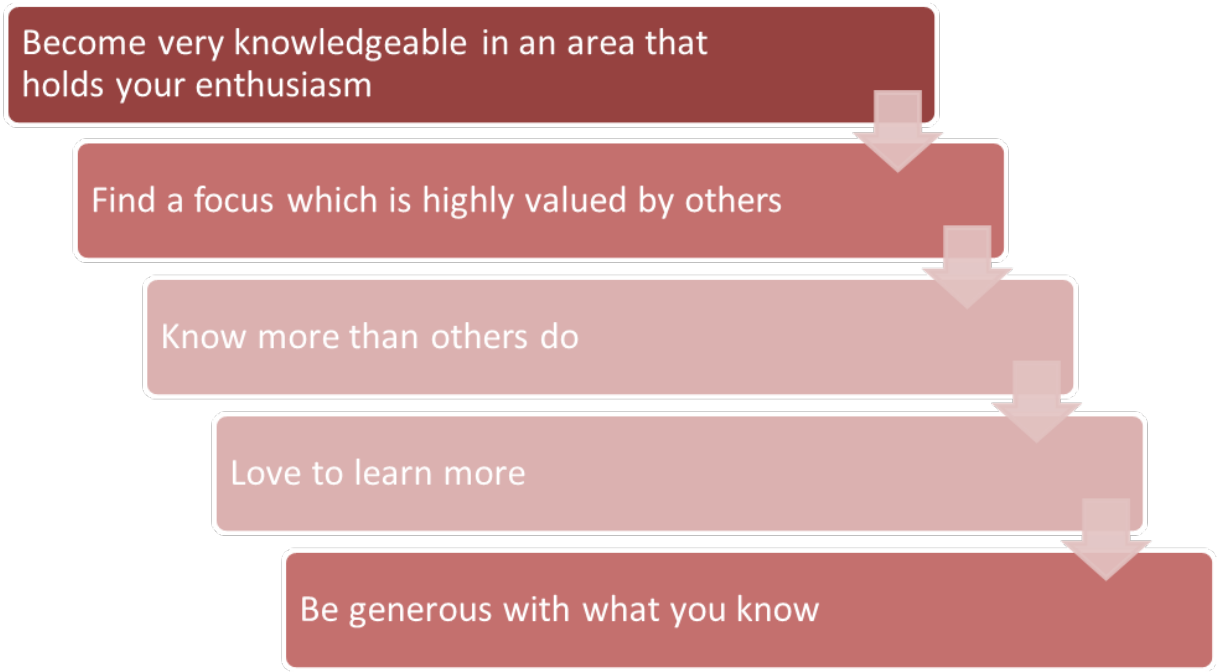
The key to developing a career built around your enthusiasms is knowledge. One way to think about enthusiasm in relation to careers is to bring together Richard Koch's ideas with some of the insight from Tim Sanders quotation. Imagine the impact of an enthusiasm focused on what other value combined with the ideas of loving what you do, and being generous with your knowledge and expertise.

In terms of your own career development think about how you can apply an enthusiasm to your career that encompasses the points we have discussed.

How can you:


Become very knowledgeable in an area that holds your enthusiasm
Find a focus which is highly valued by others
Know more than others do
Love to learn more
Be generous with what you know

When thinking about your career development, consider the importance of enthusiasm. Becoming an acknowledged leader in a field which enthuses you may make you a happy worker. Don't forget though, fostering your colleagues' passions, wherever possible, could also make you a happy manager.

Keep improving and learning more leads us into the next section of this e-book. Education and learning often go together with career development.

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# 5 Career builders: building your own education

Education and career development go hand-in-hand. Here we introduce an approach to learning and developing your career using a story with some powerful imagery. A Career Builder Story: "Students working on the Chapel". Below is a photo of a panel from the Driver Memorial Window, University of Chester.

This stained glass window once sat proudly in the University of Chester's chapel. It depicted a scene from the early 1800s, showing some of the English college's first students helping in its construction. Alongside their lessons they helped to build the college.

Quite literally they were the university's original career builders, building their own education! It was a vivid image and a useful reminder of what is still true. That together, learners can create a lasting contribution not only to their own development, but to that of their colleagues and their organisations.

This lies at the heart of managing our development. It's true that knowledge can be imparted in the classroom, but knowledge is also to be gained from shared experience.

We should never overlook the resources which surround us every day. As managers, we should try to create a fertile environment in which we can all learn, and draw inspiration, both from our own experience and from the vast pool of experience that surrounds us. Think about using these three vital principles for work-based learning to develop your career:

- Compelling insights
- Significant conversations
- Putting learning to work

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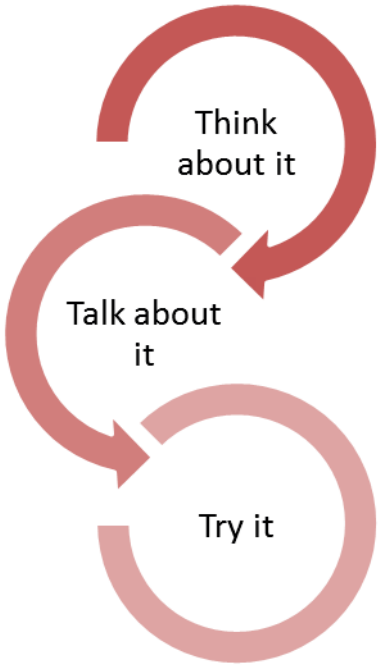
We've grouped these ideas together in to what we call our "T" break model:

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## 5.1 Compelling insights: think about it!

Most of us would intuitively recognise the power of stepping back and reflecting on our practices, but how many of us routinely do this? Managers learn much more from their experience if they give themselves time and space. Use these for critical reflection and for the development of new perspectives.

Try to find some time, every day, to think about ideas from leading thinkers. Use these periods to discover new perspectives then relate them to your current work situations. When combined with the other work-based, career builder principles, these activities may suggest useful opportunities and compelling insights.

## 5.2 Significant conversations: talk about it!

Actively encourage open debate and discussion between your colleagues. The sharing of experiences and insights can add to your organisation's knowledge base and to your own development. Managing challenging but supportive discussions can be a valuable educational tool. These discussions may reveal valuable and sometimes surprising ideas, plus practical suggestions as to how these might be applied. Capitalise on the wealth of experience possessed by your colleagues by encouraging significant conversations.

"An Easy Way To Become A Conversationalist" is a chapter in Dale Carnegie's classic self-development book: How to Win Friends and Influence People. The wisdom and sincerity in this book greatly bely what some consider an unfortunate title. To lay the foundations for some significant conversations, whether in work or social settings, some of his words are worth quoting here:

"So if you aspire to be a good conversationalist, be an attentive listener. To be interesting be interested. Ask questions that other persons will enjoy answering. Encourage them to talk about themselves and their accomplishments."

## 5.3 Putting learning to work: try it!

Though not his, two other quotes from Carnegie's book are also worthy of note:

"Education is the ability to meet life's situations," and "the great aim of education is not knowledge but action".

Putting the learning gained from insights and conversations to work is the third career builder principle. Effective management can't be separated from its context. Start by thinking about the right questions to ask. Then look to draw in the relevant management concepts and theories that will help you take action.

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Try them out in your own workplace. Think about applying the practical suggestions arising from your significant conversations. Involve your colleagues in the process and outcomes, refining or adjusting actions as necessary. Learn from your experience and share this in any subsequent discussions.

We believe that connecting these three strands enables a truly fulfilling work-based learning experience. One that facilitates a virtuous circle. People bring their education and experience to work. Sharing and building on these results in growth for managers, their colleagues and for the organisations in which they work.

As we learn and develop we create new opportunities for ourselves. There are things we now know about, or have experience of, that mean we can do different things and do things differently. What though do you want to do with all the knowledge, skills and experience you have acquired? That is what we look at next with some searching questions about what motivates you at work.

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# 6 How do you define your work?

What's your motivation in the workplace? There is a famous story about three stonecutters which many will already know.

In this story, each woodcutter was asked what he was doing. One answered that he was earning a day's pay. The second that he was a stone cutter, cutting stone. Only the third replied that he was doing something other than the obvious. He was building a cathedral….

The story demonstrates the leadership quality of seeing the bigger picture. The third stonecutter saw his job in the context of something much bigger. He alone saw that he was helping to create something.

Of course, that's all well and good if you're part of creating something rare, great and noble. What though, if you're not building a cathedral? What if you're cleaning floors, or sweeping streets, or serving at a checkout? Or, for that matter, sat at a desk typing on a computer! What then is your motivation in the workplace?

## 6.1 Crafting a calling

The US academic and positive psychologist Seligman told a wonderful story. He recounted visiting a good friend in hospital when an orderly came into the room.

The man proceeded to take out pictures from his bag and fix them to the wall, beyond the foot of the patient's bed. Seligman asked him what he was doing.

"My job? I'm an orderly on this floor," he answered. "But I bring in new prints and photos every week. You see, I'm responsible for the health of all these patients. Take Mr. Miller here. He hasn't woken up since they brought him in, but when he does, I want to make sure he sees beautiful things right away."

It's this issue that Martin Seligman addresses in his book: "Authentic Happiness." This hospital orderly, concluded Seligman, "did not define his work as the emptying of bedpans or the swabbing of trays, but as protecting the health of his patients and procuring objects to fill this difficult time of their lives with beauty. He may have held a lowly job, but he crafted it into a high calling."

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## 6.2 How do you see your work?

The stone cutter story revealed three different responses to how the stone cutters saw their work. One thought he was simply earning a day's pay. The second thought he was cutting stones. The third thought he was building a cathedral. Each indicated a very different view of motivation in the workplace. Academics and writers have tended to distinguish between three kinds of "work orientation":

- A job – earning a day's pay
- A career – a stone cutter, cutting stones
- A calling (vocation) – building a cathedral

You may do a job just to earn a weekly pay cheque. Perhaps you're not looking for other rewards and it's simply a way to support yourself or your family. Or maybe you do it because it enables you to do other things in your life, such as leisure interests, study or community work. It may be an interim step until you find something else, or a necessity which you feel you can't leave at the moment.

If you feel you're in a career, this suggests a more personal and committed investment in work. You'll almost certainly be interested in personal and professional development. You'll probably (but not necessarily) also be keen to achieve promotion, status indicators and increased salary.

However, when it comes to a calling, you'll have a passionate commitment to your work for its own sake. You'll probably be doing what you love, or doing something that contributes to the greater good. Like the third stonecutter, you may feel you're building something of social worth. Being engaged in a calling tends to be fulfilling in its own right.

These "work orientations" are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, you may be doing a job which pays for you to pursue your calling outside of work. Your motivation in the workplace might thus be quite different to someone who couldn't see the bigger picture in what they do.

No matter how satisfying work might be, it would be a mistake to rely on our work as our only means of satisfaction in life. In fact there is evidence that happy people have a more balanced life, using roles and pastimes outside of work to help them to be happier. Our attitude to work will also alter at different times of our lives when we have different priorities.

Thinking about these "work orientations" may help you to think differently about your motivation in the workplace. However, wouldn't it be better, in an ideal world, to do something we really loved for a living? To pursue a calling?

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## 6.3 Can you make your work more like a calling?

Some argue that we can regard any job as a calling if we re-frame how we see it. Rather like the hospital orderly in Seligman's story. This is what Amy Wrzesniewski, a professor of Business at New York University, discovered when she interviewed cleaners at a hospital. Whilst she found that many only regarded their work as a job, many saw the greater good in what they did. Many saw their work as vital in contributing to the well-being of sick people and considered their work a calling. That was their motivation in the workplace.

So the ability to re-frame what we do is quite important. It can be easy to lose touch with why we originally started to work in a particular occupation or place of work. Alternatively, it maybe that you've never really given it that much thought before. It feels more like you have drifted in to the work that you do. However you think or feel about you work at the moment there is always the possibility of re-framing what you do.

## 6.4 Leaving a legacy

One way of re-framing what we do is to think about our work as leaving a legacy. Building a cathedral is leaving a legacy but so is working for the benefit of family or loved ones. Even the small things we do can have a beneficial impact on others, like helping to make someone else's day a good day. Perhaps your legacy is in the small things, such as an orderly brightening up a patient's room with inspiring pictures. In fact the small things in life can often have a bigger impact than we imagine.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- What is your motivation in the workplace?
- Can You Re-define Your Work?
- Can you re-frame how you think about your work?
- Do you see work as a job, a career, or a calling?
- What contribution are you making,
- What contribution would you like to make?
- How could your work be more like a calling?

If work is more a job and less a career or calling, what other things in your life bring fulfilment and a sense of contribution? If these are missing, what can you do to create something new?

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When thinking about how people might re-define their motivation in the workplace, what better place to finish than with the words of Martin Luther King Jr.:

If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry.

He should sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.

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# 7 Do what you love

As you begin to craft your career towards what you really want to do you are beginning to find out more about what you would love to do. However you also need some strategies to cope with not being at that ideal position. This is what we will look at next.

Some people don't feel comfortable when using the word "love" in relation to work. Indeed many might argue that the world of work is too pressurised for anything as soft or sentimental as love. When asked how we feel about our work, those inclined to respond positively might use words like "enjoyable," "interesting" or "rewarding".

Those of you who are less than happy in your jobs will undoubtedly use different words to describe your feelings, though that's a vocabulary best left to your own imagination! Whatever your feelings about your own work situation, one thing is certain. The majority of us will spend almost a third of our adult lives in the workplace.

As we spend so much of our time and energy at work, learning how to be happy during those hours is surely well worth the effort.

We suggest a helpful way to think about work is to use our Happy Work-cycle. The cycle is designed to help you analyse your feelings about your employment, and to help you put your current work situation into a broader perspective. It is not always possible to be at a point where you are doing what you love, so we have suggested way to think about how you cope with a range of different circumstances that you may be facing, and turn them to your advantage.

The model encourages you to spend time thinking about your current work situation, and then more time asking yourself some important questions.

We suggest you spend as much time as you need thinking about what might be your optimum occupation. By this we mean an occupation that might be referred to as a calling. Something you'd enjoy so much you'd be happy to do it, regardless of the income.

If you do manage to identify your calling, and that may take some time, next start to think about what it would take to turn these thoughts into reality. You may think this isn't currently feasible for many reasons, but there's nothing to stop you starting your journey towards your calling, if only by beginning to think positively.

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In the meantime, you may have to make the most of a work situation which may not be ideal but is nonetheless a big part of your life. The Happy Work-cycle is explained in more detail below.

In short, it suggests ways to get the most out of your work. Regardless of whether you've managed to achieve your calling, are well on the way, or have only just started thinking about it, the Happy Work-cycle can help you to be happier if you try to:

1. Do what you love, or…
2. Do more of what you love, or…
3. Learn to love what you do, or…
4. Learn to live with what you do, or, if it comes to this…
5. Leave what you do.

## 7.1 The happy work-cycle

Do What You Love or....
Do More Of What You Love or....
Learn To Love What You Do or....
Learn To Live With What You Do or....
Leave What You Do
What Would You Love To Do?

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## 7.2 Do what you love

The cycle starts with a key question. Spend as much time as you need deciding what you'd love to do. What is it you'd gladly spend your working day doing? Next spend time thinking about how you can make your living by doing it. It might sound easy, but it's almost certainly not – though you won't know until you've at least given it some thought. Think about some of the earlier sections in this e-book.

- What motivates you?
- What are you enthusiastic about?
- What kind of work might feel more like a calling to you?

Of course, you may be there right now: doing what you love. If you're already working at your calling, congratulations! Long may it last. Enjoy your life, but be sure to share the happiness. Tell someone who's not happy at work about your experiences. Who knows, you may change their life for the better too. If you're not there yet, but know where you'd like to spend your working life; try to make the most of whatever it is you're currently doing. Start by trying to do more of what you love.

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## 7.3 Do more of what you love

Some people never even come close to earning a living by working at their calling. This may be through a conscious decision to ignore the idea – to settle for the status quo. That's fine. We make our own decisions in life. Others may not be able to pursue what they'd really love to do because of their commitment to others – family, partners, and friends. Living a life which has a positive impact on those we care about is a key element of happiness.

Regardless of whether or not your current job is a stepping stone to other things, you could still benefit from trying to do the things you love whilst there. Here are some things to think about:

- In your current occupation, are there elements of your job that you love more than others?
- Do you have particular strengths that, when applied, give you extra job satisfaction?
- Could you arrange your working life so that you can make the most of these opportunities? See what you can negotiate with your manager. It would be to the organisation's benefit too!

If it's not possible to build more of what you love in to what you do, the next thing to try is to adjust your mental attitude to your job. Try learning to love what you do.

## 7.4 Learn to love what you do

Our attitude to life is largely our own business so there is much about our own happiness that we can control. Try applying this career tips to your work:

- Re-frame – Even if you can't spend all of your time doing the specific aspects of your job that bring you the most happiness, try to adopt a positive mental attitude to all of your work. Try to "re-frame" how you feel about your work.
- Re-kindle – Did you once love what you do? Try to rekindle the fire! Remember what it was that you once enjoyed and make a conscious effort to feel that way again.
- Good days at work – Think about the good things in your day – routines, surprises, relationships, small rewards. Focus on these positives, rather than the negatives that make you unhappy.
- Contribution – Think about the overall contribution your organisation makes to its customers or to society in general. Focus on your own input to this contribution.
- Positive thinking – Try to consciously think the best about your work, rather than the worst. Positive thinking, looking for the best in people or situations, can work wonders if you just give it a try.

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## 7.5 Learn to live with what you do

Even if you can't get enthused about your work, try to be positive about what your work does for you. Our situations vary greatly, but the majority of people work in jobs that contribute to at least a subsistence standard of living. Don't forget that, however much we might dislike our jobs, they pay for the things we have in life. Quite often for the things our families have in life. After all, you wouldn't be working in your job if you didn't get at least some rewards! Who knows, after reading this your work may not seem quite so bad, especially if you come to realise it may only a stepping stone to something better.

Continual self-development is another key factor in promoting our own happiness. Perhaps you could use the time in your current job to focus your development on ways to move towards your calling. Whatever you do, continue to give of your best, as that is a key to happiness. Though if there are things you just can't change, about your job or about yourself, adopt what US Academic Bob Sutton calls "healthy indifference".

To seek a balanced approach to happiness, both in and beyond the workplace, is good advice whatever your view of your job. Perhaps focus on other aspects of your life that do make you happy. Perhaps you are already engaged in your calling but it's not work-related.

For many people, voluntary or community work can be the greatest enjoyment in life, and their "day job" is simply the necessary price they pay to enjoy their leisure time. If even this attempt at positive thinking doesn't work then it might just be time to think about leaving what you do.

## 7.6 Leave what you do

If all else fails, and if you can't change either yourself or your work situation, then it's probably time to look for something else. The ideal would be to take another step towards your calling but if that is not yet an option, don't do anything hasty. Explore any options that may exist within your current employment. Perhaps a transfer to another department may re-invigorate you. If not, maybe something a little more drastic such as a role change, or even a step down the ladder. Could you actually lead a happier life by doing less at work, or by taking on fewer responsibilities?

If an internal move is not an option, try to focus on what you've learned from your current situation and how you'd like to improve on that in your next job. There are no guarantees that the other side will be greener, but try to find another job where you can be happier. Hopefully by using the skills, knowledge and insights you've gained from applying this work-cycle.

If you are in the position of being a manager, we must remember that our responsibility is to both ourselves and to the colleagues we manage.

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Consequently the last career tip from our Happy Work cycle is a call to all managers to think about the Happy Work-cycle in terms of both your own situations, and with reference to the people you manage.

Think again about the elements of the work-cycle, but with your colleagues in mind. For example, could you use the Happy Work-cycle as a basis for your employee goal setting strategies? Hopefully this may lead you to a better understanding of workplace dynamics. It might also lead you to a whole series of new questions and ideas which, if addressed, might just make a difference to the experiences of everybody in your workplace.

If you could make that sort of contribution to your own and your colleagues' well-being, you really would be on the way to being a happy manager.

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# 8 Career change advice: make your interview questions count!

Thinking through the Happy Work Cycle may well lead you to ideas about applying for a new job. For all of us at some stage in our career development we will be faced with coping with an interview.

Here's some good career change advice for your next job interview. When your interviewers give you the chance to ask questions, make them count! Robert Sutton's book – "The No Asshole Rule: Building a Civilised Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't", stresses the importance of keeping the wrong person out of an organisation. It also implies that it is helpful to know about what an organisation is like to work for, is it a "civilised workplace".

If you are the applicant for a job there will be many questions you will be asked, and that you will want to ask, but one question is often missed. How do you know the job is really for you?

Ok, there are lots of ways to discover facts about an organisation, but how do you know if people really are happy working there?

And if they're not, the chances are you won't be either!

Think about the kind of questions you could ask which will help you to find out whether it is a great place to work. It would be helpful to know from your interviewer or panel:

- How they would describe working at the place
- What do they particularly enjoy about working there
- Why would they recommend working at this organisation
- Why they think it is a great place to work

The important thing though, is that you try to find out what sort of organisation you could be joining. Asking open-ended questions about experiences is an ideal way to do just that.

You might like to take some tips from Southwest Airlines hiring process. Providing job candidates with the opportunity to meet existing staff – not just managers – can provide insights for both parties. Consider this extract from a Babson Insights interview with Southwest's CEO, Herb Kelleher:

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"For our interviewing in general and looking for leadership in particular, we use model employees to do it. We bring in our mechanics to interview mechanics, pilots to interview pilots, flight attendants to interview flight attendants, etc. We want their insights. They're out in the field, they know the kinds of people we want and so we involve them in the hiring process. And of course they can give us some pretty good insight."

Getting the right staff, in the right jobs is critical. Getting the wrong staff in these jobs can be disastrous! This has to be a mutual process though. Ensuring job applicants are afforded the opportunity to explore your attitude to work is just as important as finding out about theirs.

Here's a thought-provoking story to make you think carefully about what you notice during an interview for a new job….

An HR manager died and found himself before the Pearly Gates. As he hadn't seen an HR manager in some time, and being in a mischievous mood, St Peter decided to allow the manager to tour both heaven and hell before deciding which he'd prefer. Thinking he'd leave the best until last, the manager first went down to look at hell. To his surprise, he found it was nothing like he'd imagined. Instead of the fiery inferno he'd expected, he found hell to be more like an exclusive country club. He was met by the devil himself, wearing a business suit and oozing charm and bonhomie. Taken for a tour around the luxury accommodation, across the manicured grounds, around the leisure facilities, the manager was even allowed to play a round of golf on the exquisite, championship course. For the whole day, he was pampered, served and spoiled, wanting for nothing.

The next day the manager was taken for a tour of heaven. Predictably, this was also very impressive. Clean, fresh, relaxing, wholesome, and as welcoming as he'd always envisaged. For much of the day though, he was left alone, to savour heaven's peace and tranquility. At the end of the tour, St Peter asked the HR manager which he was going to choose. After careful reflection, the manager decided to opt for hell. "It's not at all as bad as I'd imagined, he said, "and, as nice as heaven is, I think there's more going on in hell. It's a better fit for me."

Without another word, the manager was transported to the gates of hell. As these opened he found himself standing before a hot, arid, wasteland, filled with toiling labourers. This was nothing like the hell the manager had seen the previous day. The devil greeted him again, but this time it was very different. "Get to work," shouted the red-cloaked devil, pushing him roughly into the crowd. "What's happened?" cried the manager, in anguish. "This is not what you showed me yesterday!"

"Ah," replied the devil. "That's because yesterday we were recruiting. Today you're an employee…."

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# 9 Dealing with job loss

The other extreme to a job interview is dealing with job loss. In this next section we provide some thoughts and ideas on: how to stop worrying with Plan A.

Faced with job loss? Whether it's being made redundant, not being made permanent, or actually being dismissed, losing your job can be one of life's most traumatic experiences.

On the other hand, however difficult you might find coping with forced change, there can be positives in such situations.

The 10 steps can be used to help you think through what you need to do., they can also act as a personal development plan. Maybe this example of a personal development plan can help you on your way to finding happiness in life again.

## 9.1 Plan A – dealing with job loss

The A plan gives you 10 steps you can take to see your way through a job loss:

1. Ask
2. Accept
3. Address
4. Analyse
5. Appreciate
6. Aim
7. Audit
8. Act
9. Apply
10. Achieve

**Ask** Find out why you've lost your job. If it was an economic decision at least it wasn't personal. If it was something you did wrong you may need to do some soul-searching. Or perhaps the job just wasn't right for you or for your employer. Either way, you need to know for your own benefit, and for future reference – any future employer is bound to ask.

**Accept** Let the dust settle. Don't go into hibernation or mourning, but take as much time as you can afford in order to accept what's happened. This will help you to avoid any poor judgements or hasty decisions. It's not uncommon for people suffering from trauma to go through predictable phases. You may experience denial, anger, bargaining, and depression before the acceptance which may allow you to move on.

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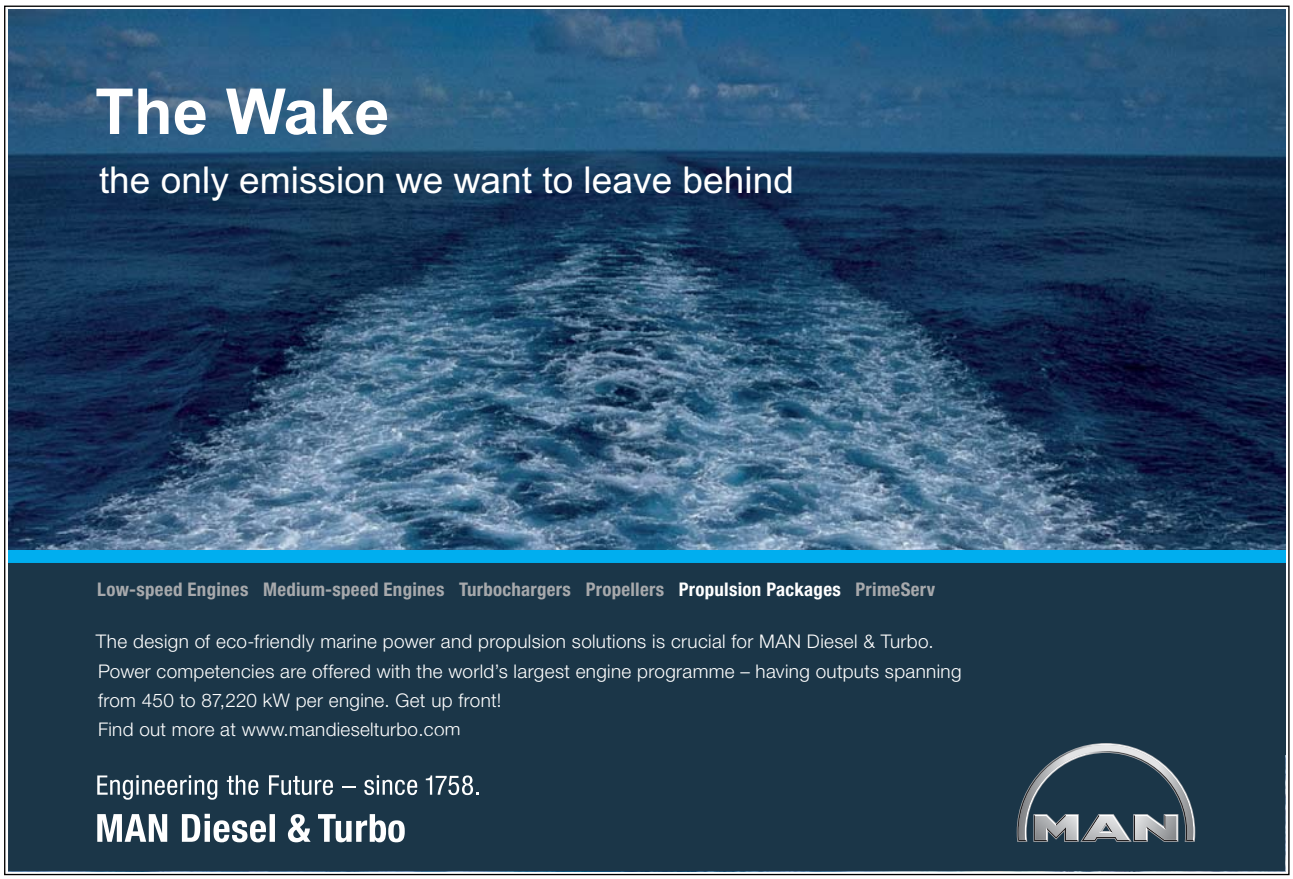
**Address** It's possible (if not probable) that losing your job will leave you in short term difficulties. Deal with the practicalities as soon as you can. Your immediate financial situation will need to be appraised, as may elements of your lifestyle. Some short-term savings may give you breathing-space but you may need advice over longer-term financial matters and career options.

**Analyse** Were you happy in your previous employment? What circumstances surrounded your work or profession? Are there any trends, threats or opportunities that need to be factored into your future actions? Think about your personal situation. Are you happy where you're living? Is now the time to make changes based on changing family circumstances, such as children growing up?

**Appreciate** Always be positive. After coming to terms with the practical and emotional issues surrounding your job loss, see this as an opportunity. You've taken stock of your personal or professional situation; now try to think about how you can make positive changes. This might be just the prompt to make that domestic or career move you've always thought about, or maybe it's time to down-size to make room for other pursuits.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**Aim** Think about what you do next. Is it time for more of the same or time for a change? Formulate your plans. Draw up a list of what's important to you, what you want from life, and what you need to do to get it. Be adventurous – this might be just the opportunity you've needed to start on long forgotten dreams or ambitions. Think about putting a plan together. Be sure to involve anybody close to you who is likely to be affected.

**Audit** Take stock of your personal and professional situation. Have a good, critical look at your CV. Do you have what's needed to put your plan into operation? If not, what do you need to add or do? More experience, education or practical qualifications? Research any options you're considering.

**Act** Take action. If needed, update your skills or qualifications. If you need more experience before you can put your plan into action, how can you gain it? Build up any networks you might need. Build your plan around SMART objectives. Make them specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bounded. Go for them! Stay positive….

**Apply** For your next job – if that's what your plan to do.

The lessons you've learned – from losing your job, or from the work you've put in since. Nothing in life is wasted if we use it to help us grow. Make sure you learn and benefit from the experience.

**Achieve** Think about what you have achieved through this difficult process.

- Closure from losing your job?
- Insights into yourself, your life, your future?
- Whatever you set your sights on from here…?

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# 10 Begin with the end in mind

We thought we'd end by getting you to think about beginnings. Having read and thought through the ideas in this guide it can be helpful to step back and think about how you begin to move your career development forward.

Here are two things to consider when evaluating your career development. Firstly, consider a counter-intuitive thought.

- Try defining success in qualitative rather than quantitative terms.
  It may be that broad, subjective benefits are ultimately of greater benefit than the narrow specifics we normally associate with careers.

- Secondly, begin any activity or project with the end in mind.
  If you're going to put the time and effort into an activity, ask yourself, is it really what I want to do? If the benefit of career development is the quality of life we get from the time we invest, begin any task with the end in mind.

Perhaps one way to think about this is to use the threefold definition of happiness which US academic Martin Seligman calls "Authentic Happiness":

- The pleasant life (pleasure and enjoying the here and now)
- The good life (engagement; the depth of involvement with family, work, romance and hobbies)
- The meaningful life (significance – using personal strengths to serve some larger end).

They can be a helpful way to think about your work. For example:

- How can you build more activities in to your day/work that you enjoy doing?
- How can you re-frame what you do in terms of how you help others?
- How can you build a career that you feel is meaningful?

Fully realising the benefits of career development may actually mean asking yourself some hard questions:

- Why are you doing the things you're doing?
- What do you really want from life?

Here's a story that helps to provide perspective to our career development.

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## 10.1 The idle fisherman – a pleasant life

A corporate executive, on holiday in a small, Greek sea-coast village, was strolling by the docks and taking in the local colour. He complimented one fisherman on the quality of his catch.

"How long did it take you to get all those fish?" he asked.

"Not very long," answered the Greek. "An hour or two."

"Then why didn't you stay out longer to catch more?"

Shrugging, the Greek explained that his catch was sufficient to meet his needs, and those of his family.

The executive asked, "But what do you do with the rest of your time?"

I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, and take a nap with my wife. In the evening, I go to the village to see my friends, dance a little, play the bouzouki, and sing songs. I have a full life."

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The executive said, "Well I have an MBA from Harvard and I'm sure I can help you. You should start by fishing longer every day. You'll catch extra fish that you can sell. With the revenue, you can buy a bigger boat. With the extra money the larger boat will bring you, you can buy a second boat and a third one, and so on, until you have an entire fleet of trawlers. Instead of selling your fish to a middleman, you can then negotiate directly with the processing plants and maybe even open your own plant.

You can ship fish to markets all around the world. In time, you can then move to New York City to direct your huge enterprise."

"How long would that take?" asked the Greek.

"Twenty, perhaps twenty-five years," replied the executive.

"And after that?"

"When your business gets really big, you can sell shares and make millions!" exclaimed the executive with zeal.

"Millions? Really? And after that?"

"After that you'll be able to retire, live in a small village near the coast, sleep late, play with your grandchildren, catch a few fish, take a nap with your wife, and spend your evenings singing, dancing, and playing the bouzouki with your friends."

"And what do you think I'm doing now" replied the fisherman!

## 10.2 Defining success more broadly

A good life-balance means taking the time to appreciate what we're doing now. It prompts these questions:

- What are we doing? – are we doing something that's worth doing, however that may be defined?
- Why are we doing it? – what is our ultimate goal or reward?
- Who are we doing it for? – for ourselves, families, others?
- How do we measure our success? – is it by narrow, materialistic gain or by broader, subjective achievements?

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Try thinking again about what you're doing and what you hope to achieve. Being satisfied with what you've got can be a liberating experience. Knowing when enough is enough could transform your perception of success. Perhaps the real benefits of career development come by ensuring we don't waste it, doing the wrong things for the wrong reasons. Guard against narrow definitions of success. Stop following the crowd, simply striving for more. Consider what you have to appreciate, here and now. Stop and smell the flowers!

How can you realise the benefits of career development?

Begin with the end in mind, and
Define success broadly – recognising what you have, and when enough is enough.

## 10.3 Remember who you work for

A recent UK TV commercial showed short clips of children admonishing their work-obsessed parents.

"Your fired" said the children, as parents came home late from work, or missed special moments.

The ads finished with the statement "remember who you're working for".

Careering Ahead means many things but it should also mean ensuring that working doesn't diminish our appreciation of what we have now – the pleasures in life. Think through what you really value in life, and what you need to do to enjoy it. Perhaps these are the real benefits of developing your career?

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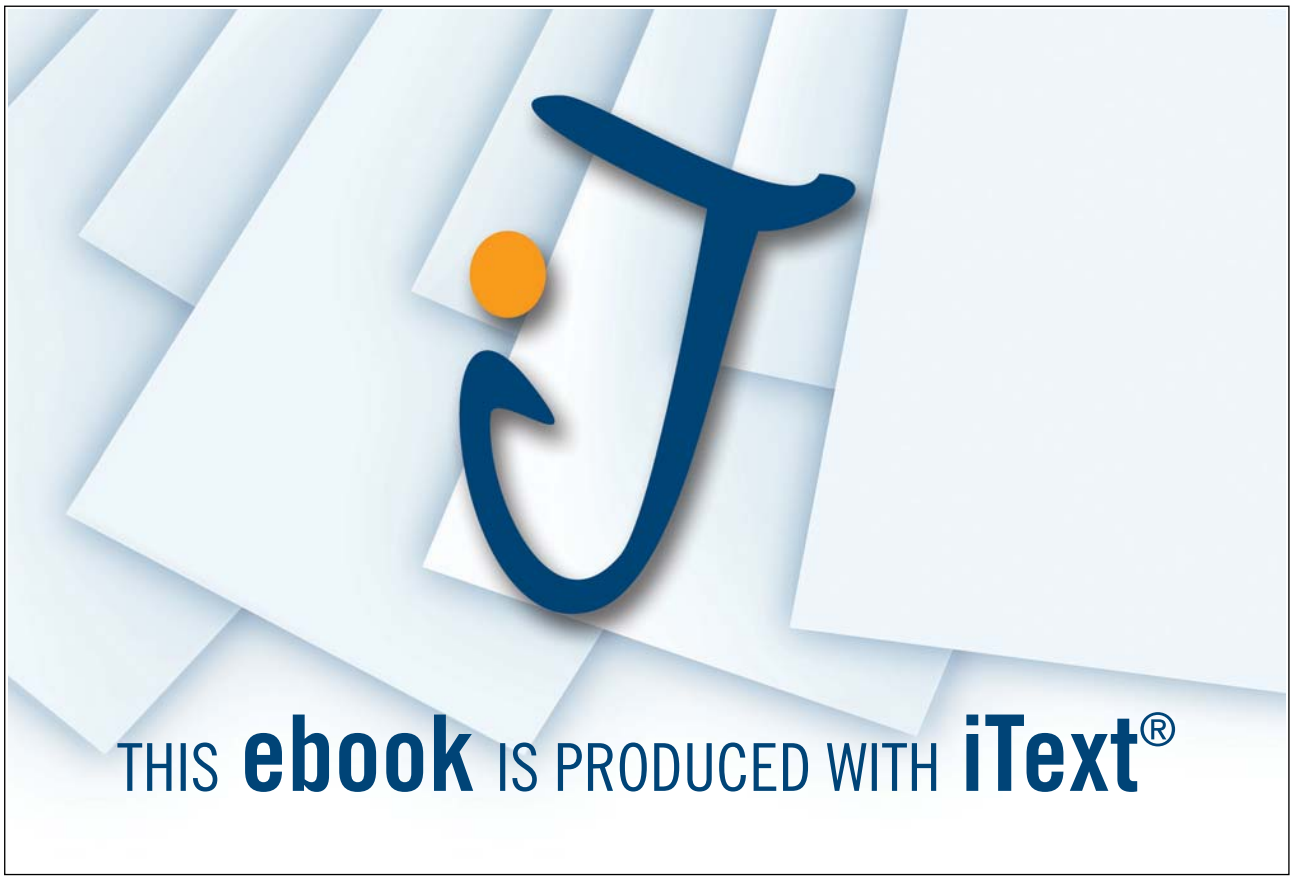
# 11 What next?

This book has explored career development and encouraged you to not just let things happen to you so that you just get by. Instead, don't just put up with getting on, but rather think through how you can get ahead in your career. What you do next is up to you. It will of course depend on what stage of your career you are at. Think about what has struck you as you have read this e-book, and if you haven't already, begin to take control of your career and find out how to get ahead!

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# 12 Further reading

You can find more ways to help you start Careering Ahead here:

Read our e-book on career skills: "Hidden Communication Skills Revealed! The career skills that make you stand-out" –

Stand out from the crowd by practising your hidden communications skills! There are numerous books on basic communication skills but this e-book looks at some which are often overlooked. Interpersonal skills are about how we get on with others. What we say, how we say it, how we listen, the questions we ask, our demeanour, actions and movement are all the stuff of interpersonal communication. Too often taken for granted, yet mastery of these skills can help you to stand-out in the workplace.

Read our e-book on High-impact interpersonal skills – How to be a persuasive leader.

This e-book explores how leaders can develop the high-impact inter-personal skills which will make them both more effective and more successful. Become a better leader by honing high-impact inter-personal skills such as: influencing; persuading; delegating; coaching; praising and more.

If you want to read more about the three stone cutter story we use in this e-book you can find more here: Leadership Quality: Seeing the Bigger Picture.

If you are thinking of a career change then this interesting article helps you think through your decision before you make it! "Career Change!"